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DEPARTMENT FOR EUR/WE AND OES/OA (EVAN BLOOM AND LAWRENCE
HUGHES)

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: SPAIN STRONGLY SUPPORTS U.S. PROPOSAL TO LIMIT
ANTARCTIC TOURISM

REF: SECSTATE 42866

11. ESTHOFF made reftel points April 19 to MFA Special Envoy for the Antarctic Treaty Ambassador Juan Martinez-Cattaneo Hingston, urging Spain to support U.S. proposals to limit Antarctic tourism at the May thirtieth Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting (ATCM) in New Delhi. Martinez-Cattaneo, who will lead the Spanish delegation to New Delhi, had already obtained a copy of the U.S. working paper containing our tourism-related proposals for the meeting. He said that Spain would support "these magnificent U.S. initiatives" in their entirety.

12. Martinez-Cattaneo briefed ESTHOFF on two recent accidents involving tourist boats near one of the two Spanish Antarctic facilities. He said these two accidents, which occurred in November 2006 and January 2007, illustrate the pressing need to better limit Antarctic tourism and will be described in the Spanish presentation in New Delhi. He said a major tourism-related fatality causing accident in the Antarctic is inevitable and that we needed to act now to limit Antarctic tourism before it was too late. He said Spain would be willing to support proposals even stronger than those contained in the U.S. paper. For example, Spain would support banning the landing of passengers from boats containing 400 or more passengers (compared to 500 or more in the U.S. proposal). Spain would also support making this ban binding (vice non-binding as in the U.S. proposal).

13. Martinez-Cattaneo also said that Spain believes that the ATCM should consider tailoring the passenger landing ban to different Antarctic ecosystems. While some areas might be able to support larger landings, there were other areas being visited that clearly require even more stringent restrictions on the number of people allowed to land at any given time. Spain believes that a one-size-fits-all approach does not make sense.
Aguirre